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COUNTRY USSR/Austria (Soviet Zone)

SUBJECT Military Information

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5. In the year 1948 pre-military training 

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6. That summer the recruits had some kind of field exercises and the most  
efficient were selected 

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23. The recruits were divided into four platoons of 28 men, each with a Sr Lt in charge. Each platoon was in its turn divided into three sections, each with a 3r Sgt in charge. The first two platoons were rifle platoons, the 3rd was an MG and the 4th a mortar platoon. [redacted]
24. Training in the school was from 0600 until 2300 hours each day and was so strenuous [redacted] It required the utmost willpower to keep up with it. Discipline was very strict and additional fatigues and detention were given for the slightest paltry matter.
25. [redacted] two separate incidents when one recruit shot himself in the leg and another in the chest in order to avoid carrying on their training at the school. Also of two others who had tried on separate occasions to desert, but had got lost. One of them was caught and the other returned to give himself up.

A specimen time table was the following:

0600	Reveille
0600 - 0620	PT
0620 - 0700	Ablutions
0700 - 0800	Breakfast
0800 - 1000	Weapon training
1000 - 1100	"Current Affairs"
1100 - 1300	Drill
1300 - 1400	Dinner
1400 - 1600	Training
1600 - 1800	Self Study
1800 - 1900	Tea
1900 - 2000	"Current Affairs"
2000 - 2230	Fatigues and time off
2230	Evening parade
2230 - 2300	20 minutes evening march.
2300	Lights out

Twice per week [redacted] two hours of political indoctrination. In addition there were frequent alarms at night, [redacted] No allowance was made for this and the programme of the following day had to be gone through.

26. [redacted]
27. At the end of the course [redacted] underwent a test and all participants passed and were made Jun Sgts.
28. [redacted] 3 Platoon, 3 Co, 1st Bn of the 290 Guards Rifle Regt [redacted] had a checkpoint post 1½ km from the British Zonal Boundary at Lassing. The platoon consisted of Lt Varnavin in charge, four Sgts and 20 privates. [redacted]

29. The duties of the post consisted of checking the identity documents of people entering the Soviet Zone. As the guards could not read German, only one kind of document was admissible, which had a Russian translation of the persons' particulars. Any document number above 61000, the omission of one of the 11 (?) required stamps and any name that was in the "black list" of 110 names, meant taking the person to the Co HQ at Goestling, officer i/c Capt Chistoboyev, or if it could not be cleared up there, to the Bn HQ at Gering, officer i/c Lt Col Tseligorodtsov. There were two more boundary posts, one at Langau, officer i/c Sen Lt Molakhov and at Grosshoellenstein, officer i/c Lt Kolesnikov.
30. The whole platoon occupied one house and it was strictly forbidden to fraternize with the local population. This rule was rigidly applied.
31. [redacted]

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43. No leave is granted to ORs while in the Army. [redacted] only one case where a soldier got 10 days compassionate leave. Granting of leave is held out as an inducement for outstanding work [redacted]

44. Slight cases of AWOL were punished with up to 20 days of arrest, which was preferable to the usual court martial.

45. No opportunities were available during the Army service to obtain better education or to learn a trade.

46. Each unit has a library but the majority of books dealt with political questions and were not much in demand.

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47. A mobile cinema visited units once or twice per month.
48. "Stalinski Boyets", "Krashaya Zvezda", "Pravda", "Komsomolskaya Pravda" and "Za Chesti Rodyini" were available at the unit.
49. The Zampolit was the officer who concerned himself with the welfare of the soldiers. By the nature of his calling he inspired little confidence in the rank and file, because a political inference was deduced from all complaints.
50. The Zampolit would ask generally how family conditions were at home. Some soldier would get up and relate that he had learned from letters from home that his mother was starving since he, her only support had been called up. The Zampolit would take his particulars and write to the authorities at the soldier's home. Later the Zampolit would read the reply received that the mother was well taken care of. Whereupon the soldier would throw his mother's letters at the Zampolit and tell him to read them himself. Anybody involved in such a scene would disappear from the unit and no information as to his whereabouts would be given.
52. [ ] a case where a soldier received a letter in which his mother complained of her poverty. The soldier used this letter for agitation amongst his comrades; he was court-martialled and sentenced to seven years detention. It was mostly when letters arrived from home that soldiers used to get drunk to drown their sorrows.
53. The general attitude is one of mutual contempt. The soldier despises the officer because he considers him responsible for the complete lack of freedom which is his lot. In theory the same restrictions apply to both officers and ORs, yet the officers have their messes and have opportunities to leave the barracks and the ORs know that many officers are arrested and sent to the USSR because of their association with Austrian girls. This lack of opportunity irks the ORs more than anything else.

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